



**TO:** Denver City Council  
Neighborhoods and Planning Committee

**FROM:** Kelly Leid, Executive Director NDCC; Brad Buchanan, Executive Director CPD

**DATE:** February 18, 2015

**RE:** **National Western Center Master Plan**

The City and County of Denver, the National Western Association, Colorado State University, History Colorado, and the Museum of Nature and Science are pleased to submit the final draft of the National Western Center Master Plan to the Neighborhoods and Planning Committee of the Denver City Council. The Planning Board unanimously approved the plan at its regular meeting on February 4<sup>th</sup>, 2015 as a supplement to the Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000.

The Planning Board approved the plan based on its compliance with the three established criteria for supplements to the Comprehensive Plan:

1. Consistency with the Denver Comprehensive Plan and applicable supplements
2. Inclusive public process
3. Long-term view

The remainder of this memo outlines the details of the plan's compliance with the three established criteria.

## **1 - Plan Consistency**

### **Denver Comprehensive Plan 2000**

The National Western Center Master Plan is consistent with many objectives and strategies found in Comprehensive Plan 2000, including the following:

#### **Environmental Sustainability Chapter**

**Objective 1:** Distribute environmental burdens and benefits

- **1-A:** Encourage redevelopment of vacant, underutilized and environmentally compromised land known as brownfields.
- **1-B:** Promote public-private sector involvement and cooperation with citizens to formulate plans and actions that achieve shared responsibilities and benefits.

**Objective 2:** *Ensure environmental stewardship of natural resources, taking into account the entire ecosystem, not just human needs. Preventing pollution will be the action of first choice in accomplishing this objective.*

- **2-E:** Conserve raw materials by:
  - Promoting efforts to adapt existing buildings for new uses, rather than destroying them.
- **2-F:** Conserve land by:
  - Promoting infill development within Denver at sites where services and infrastructure are already in place.
  - Designing mixed-use communities and reducing sprawl, so that residents can live, work and play within their own neighborhoods.
  - Creating more density at transit nodes.
  - Sharing parking at activity centers.
  - Protecting natural corridors, wetlands and floodplains from the encroachment of development.

### **Land Use Chapter**

***Objective 3:*** *Preserve and enhance the individuality, diversity and livability of Denver's neighborhoods and expand the vitality of Denver's business centers*

- **3-A:** Complete neighborhood and area plans for parts of Denver where development or redevelopment is likely or desirable.
- **3-B:** Encourage quality infill development that is consistent with the character of the surrounding neighborhood, that offers opportunities for increased density and more amenities, and that broadens the variety of compatible uses.
- **3-D:** Identify and enhance existing focal points in neighborhoods, and encourage the development of such focal points where none exist.

***Objective 4:*** *Ensure that Denver's [plans] and regulatory system support the development of a clean, efficient and innovative transportation system that meets Denver's future economic and mobility needs.*

- **4-A:** Encourage mixed-use, transit-oriented development that makes effective use of existing transportation infrastructure, supports transit stations, increases transit patronage, reduces impact on the environment, and encourages vibrant urban centers and neighborhoods.
- **4-B:** Ensure that land-use policies and decisions support a variety of mobility choices including light rail, buses, paratransit, walking and bicycling, as well as convenient access for people with disabilities.

### **Mobility Chapter**

***Objective 1:*** *Provide Denver's diverse residents, workers and visitors with a choice of transportation modes that are safe and convenient.*

- **1-A:** Advocate transportation investments that increase mobility of people and their connections to employment, education, shopping, cultural opportunities and other activities.

- **1-B:** Promote public transit, both bus and rail, as a safe, attractive and convenient choice for people who might otherwise drive to employment, education, cultural, shopping or other destinations.
- **1-C:** Identify areas throughout the city where transportation policies should reflect pedestrian priorities. These include areas such as schools, child-care centers, civic institutions, business centers, shopping districts and parks.
- **1-F:** Address the transportation needs of visitors, tourists and people attending special events and attractions.

**Objective 3:** *In urban centers and in new development areas, plan, design and invest in transportation infrastructure and systems that support the principal uses within the area, provide well-integrated connections to urban centers and other destinations, and address the mobility needs of frequent users.*

- **3-B:** Promote TOD as an urban design framework for urban centers and development areas. Development at transit stations should provide both higher ridership to the transit system and viability and walkability in the area.
- **3-C:** Provide safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle facilities within urban centers and new development areas.

**Objective 7:** *Address neighborhood transportation issues in a manner that balances overall mobility with neighborhood integrity.*

**Objective 8:** *Provide safe and convenient facilities to encourage bicycling and walking for commuting, recreation and other trips.*

- **8-A:** Ensure safe and convenient access and accommodation of bicycle riders, pedestrians and transit riders.

### **Denver's Legacies Chapter**

**Objective 1:** *Protect and continue Denver's legacy of inspired urban design in the public realm.*

**Objective 3:** *Incorporate visionary urban design principles into new development patterns to achieve a higher concentration and more diverse mix of housing, employment and transportation options in identified areas of the city.*

**Objective 4:** *Reinforce the design quality, function and character of connections among public places and activity centers, recognizing that they are places in their own right and an important part of the public realm.*

**Objective 5:** *Preserve Denver's historic resources.*

**Objective 8:** *Support increased public awareness of historic preservation through education and marketing.*

**Objective 9:** *Plan for the maintenance and expansion of Denver's parks and recreation system.*

**Objective 11:** *Strengthen Denver's system of "green" connections: trails, bicycle routes, parkways, greenways and watercourses.*

**Objective 13:** *Provide all Denver residents with access to innovative recreation programs that are responsive to community needs and especially to youth.*

### **Economic Activity Chapter**

**Objective 3:** Continue to expand economic opportunity and the City's economic base with focused efforts to retain and expand existing businesses and to attract new businesses, especially in target industries.

**Objective 5:** Support the creation and growth of neighborhood businesses that enhance the vitality and quality of life in their communities.

- **3-C:** Strengthen Denver as a destination for business, leisure and convention visitors.

### **Neighborhoods Chapter**

**Objective 1:** Strengthen the positive attributes and distinctive character of each neighborhood to help sustain Denver as a healthy, vital city.

**Objective 2:** Engage neighborhood residents and organizations in collaborative efforts to share information, solve problems and plan for the future.

**Objective 3:** Make neighborhoods clean and safe places that inspire community pride, where residents and visitors feel secure and comfortable.

### **Education**

**Objective 2:** Ensure that Denver children enter school ready to succeed by improving the quality and availability of early childhood care, education and child development services.

**Objective 6:** Provide adults with opportunities to continue learning throughout life.

### **Arts and Culture Chapter**

**Objective 1:** Support and promote a flourishing artistic community.

**Objective 2:** Encourage the development and maintenance of facilities within Denver to support diverse cultural and artistic activities.

**Objective 3:** Enhance the capacity of arts and culture to act as an economic generator, and integrate arts and culture into the City's economic development activities.

- **3-B:** Incorporate Denver's arts and cultural activities, institutions and attractions into economic development and marketing plans that promote Denver as a center for tourism, conventions and business

**Objective 4:** Broaden the scope, richness and attachment to the arts in Denver by encouraging ethnic diversity in cultural expression.

### **Blueprint Denver (2002)**

The National Western Center Master Plan is consistent with many concepts and strategies found in Blueprint Denver, including the following:

#### **Key Concepts:**

- All areas of Denver are either an Area of Stability or Change, or on a continuum from change to stability
- Direct growth to places that will benefit from an infusion of activity, population and investment

- Character preservation, reinvestment and limited growth are the primary concerns for stable residential neighborhoods
- Regulations should encourage development with standards for appropriately located density
- Public private partnerships create innovative projects
- Public infrastructure investments stimulate private investment and improve the physical environment
- Smart growth connects residents to transit, jobs and centers of activity, and increases housing and employment opportunities

#### **Guiding Principles: Areas of Change**

- Contribute to urban design vision
- Respect valued attributes of area
- Expand transportation choice
- Improve environmental quality

#### **Civic Responsibilities of Small Area Plans**

- Affordable housing
- Transportation system integrity
- Transit oriented development
- Community facilities
- Consistency with adopted plans

#### **Strategic Transportation Plan (2008)**

The National Western Center Master Plan is consistent with many concepts and strategies found in the Strategic Transportation Plan, including the following:

#### **Vision**

A great city is livable for all of its citizens now and in the future. The STP creates a multimodal transportation system to support a livable, connected and sustainable city.

- Multimodal
  - Safe pedestrian linkages
  - Comprehensive bicycle system
  - Dependable transit options
  - Efficient and well-maintained infrastructure
- Safe, Efficient, Reliable
  - Connected multimodal system
  - Safe transportation network
  - Manage congestion
  - Accessible to all

#### **Innovation**

- A transformative approach to transportation.
- Plans for travelsheds, not just travel corridors.

- Move people, not just vehicles.
- Does not grow Denver's road footprint.

### **Strategy**

- Maintenance and efficiency are fundamental to our current transportation system, followed by improvements and planning for future transportation.
- A balance of behavioral, physical and operational recommendations are included.
- The result is a comprehensive plan for each travel shed.

## **Globeville Neighborhood Plan (2014)**

The National Western Center Master Plan is consistent with and progresses the implementation of many concepts and strategies found in the Globeville Neighborhood Plan, including the following:

In the Strong Globeville chapter the following strategies apply to the National Western:

### **B10. Embrace the South Platte River**

- **B10B:** An Activated Waterfront Plaza. Consider creating a waterfront plaza amenity close to the South Platte River for year-round activities with opportunities for synergy with the proposed National Western Center. Ensure that the plaza is well-connected to nearby green space, the South Platte River Trail, and the local street network.

### **B15. Improve Neighborhood Services**

- **B15C:** Provide Better Access to Community Resources in Surrounding Neighborhoods. Ensure that there is safe, accessible, all-age, multi-modal access to the following key facilities in surrounding neighborhoods, including the National Western Center

### **B16. Improve Educational Opportunities**

- **B16C:** Partner with National Western Center and Colorado State University. Take advantage of National Western's partnership with Colorado State University to collaborate with Denver Public Schools on new approaches to education, including the possible creation of a magnet school or other new educational facility.

In the Connected Globeville chapter the following strategies apply to the National Western:

### **C5. Introduce a Street Grid between Washington Street and the south Platte River**

### **C6. Introduce New Multi-modal Connections Over the River to the National Western Center**

- Introduce new multi-modal connections over the river and into the National Western Center (NWC) to enhance the catalytic impact potential on the Globeville, Elyria, and Swansea Neighborhoods and to stitch the neighborhoods together. In identifying specific alignment and design for the new connections across the river, important considerations include:
  - Accommodate vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles.

- Locate the multi-modal connections along existing street alignments in Globeville. This Plan identifies 49th and 51st Avenues as the preferred locations for these connections.
- Provide more direct access from Globeville to the future NWC commuter rail station than exists today.
- Design and locate the bridges so as to facilitate riverfront development opportunities on the Globeville side of the river (see Connecting to the National Western Stock Show Transformative Project for more details).
- Maximize efficiencies that improve water quality and stormwater conveyance as well as connectivity
- 49<sup>th</sup> and 51<sup>st</sup> are identified as the first and second priorities as options to connect over the South Platte River and to the National Western Center.

In the Healthy Globeville chapter the following strategies apply to the National Western:

**D15. Connect to the National Western Center.** Improve access and connectivity to and through residential neighborhoods and the redeveloped National Western Center.

**D18. Increase Food Access at the National Western Center.** Promote new sources of healthy foods within the redeveloped National Western Center, such as grocery stores, farmers markets, and community gardens.

In the Character Area Strategies and Transformative Projects chapter, Connect to National Western Center is a Transformative Project in order to capitalize on the economic development opportunities to enhance the waterfront and the Washington Street corridor by connecting over the South Platte River to a revitalized National Western Center.

In the Moving Forward chapter, public investment implementation priorities for Globeville include pursuing implementation of the two recommended connections across the South Platte River to the National Western Center.

### **Elyria and Swansea Neighborhoods Plan (anticipated adoption – 2/23/2015)**

The National Western Center Master Plan is consistent with and progresses the implementation of many concepts and strategies found in the Elyria and Swansea Neighborhoods Plan, including the following:

In the Unique Elyria and Swansea chapter the following strategies apply to the National Western:

- A.1** Build on the Globeville, Elyria, Swansea Oral History project and the “National Western Historic Preservation Study”
- A.2** Promote Heritage Tourism and historic integration
- A.5** Establish National Western Center’s Identity
- A.6** Involve residents in civic design
- A.7** Create community gathering spaces

In the Strong Elyria and Swansea chapter the following strategies apply to the National Western:

- B.8** Establish maximum building heights to support a variety of land uses and community places and to accommodate the redevelopment of the National Western Center.
- B.12** Encourage development of key opportunity sites, including the Denver Public Schools site directly across the street from the National Western Center Station, sites in closest proximity to the NWC station, and calls for redeveloping the National Western Center.
- B.15** Promote Water Quality through Best Practices
- B.16** Embrace the South Platte River
- B.17** Strengthen Existing Park and Recreational Assets.
- B.26** Improve access to education

In the Connected Elyria and Swansea chapter the following strategies apply to the National Western:

- C.4** Rebuild the Marion St. and BNSF Underpass
- C.5** Explore relocation and/or consolidation of the Denver Rock Island Railroad (DRI)
- C.8** Connect 49th Ave. from High St. to Brighton Blvd.
- C.9** Introduce new street connections between Elyria and Globeville
- C.10** Realign National Western Dr. between 46th Ave and Race Ct.
- C.17** Re-build Brighton Boulevard
- C.38** Evaluate Parking Patterns

In the Healthy Elyria and Swansea chapter the following strategies apply to the National Western:

- D18.** Increase Food Access at the NWC

In the Character Area Strategies and Transformative Projects chapter, one of the Character Areas is the National Western Center and Station Area. From that section the following strategies apply to the National Western:

- E.29** Target TOD Opportunities Adjacent to the Station
- E.32** Activate Brighton Boulevard as the Gateway to the NWC and Elyria
- E.34** Improve Neighborhood Access and Mobility to the NWC and to the River
- E.35** Develop the DPS Site as a Transformative Project and states: explore opportunities to develop the site as Transit Oriented Development (TOD) through integration of a parking structure for the new National Western Center. The primary redevelopment priority should be for TOD and secondarily as a parking structure.

In the Moving Forward chapter, public investment implementation priorities for Elyria and Swansea include pursuing implementation of new street connections and improved access to the South Platte River through the National Western Center.



**Finding: The proposed National Western Center Master Plan is consistent with the Denver Comprehensive Plan and relevant amendments and supplements.**

## **2 - Inclusive Public Process**

The National Western Center Master Plan is based on an extensive public engagement process, as described below:

- **National Western Citizens Advisory Committee (NWCAC).** The NWCAC was created to strengthen the engagement of the NWC development with the Globeville, Elyria, Swansea neighborhoods and the six NDCC projects and enrich the relationship between the NWSS and the neighbors. The NWCAC was formed after numerous community stakeholders applied to be on the Committee, and through a robust process, the 21 member committee was determined. The NWCAC represents all walks of life in the Globeville, Elyria Swansea Neighborhoods and in North Denver.

The NWCAC was instrumental in identifying community concerns, provided feedback during the planning process, and keeping consistent the recommendations of the NWCC master plan and neighborhood plans. The NWCAC will remain an integral component of the community engagement effort and will provide input into the implementation of the NWCC throughout the design, construction and operational phases of the project.

- **Project Leadership Committee (PLC).** The Project Leadership Committee served as the management group for the NWC Partners. The Partners and project team convened every two weeks in support of plan development. The Partners reviewed plan progress, assisted in development of plan recommendations and guided decision-making especially in regards to site layout and programming needs.
- **Globeville and Elyria Swansea Neighborhood Plans.** Throughout the NWCC planning process, the Globeville and Elyria Swansea Neighborhood planning processes were also underway. City staff and project team management attended the Globeville and Elyria Swansea Steering Committee meetings and coordinated with community members. Several NWCAC members also served as members of the neighborhood plan Steering Committees and helped to ensure consistency between the recommendations of the concurrent planning efforts.
- **NWC Public Meetings.** Four public meetings were held in the community to gather input and garner support for the planning process. These meetings were held in conjunction with project milestones and scheduled in the evenings at locations convenient to the community.
- **Communication.**
  - Project information, draft content, and announcements were posted to [denvergov.org/NDCC](http://denvergov.org/NDCC)

- Flyers were delivered through steering committee members and through the Swansea Elementary school students to encourage participation in the first two public meetings.
- Email updates were sent to the plan’s contact list to announce upcoming meetings
- Automated calls with a voice message were sent to the phone numbers of contacts without emails to announce three public meetings.

***Finding: The National Western Center Master Plan was developed through an inclusive public process.***

### **3. Long-Term View**

The National Western Center Master Plan establishes a vision framework that will guide change in the study area for the next 20+ years. Many of the recommendations are based on a long-term vision that will take many years to achieve.

***Finding: The National Western Center Master Plan has an appropriate long-term perspective.***

**Staff Recommendation:** Based on the findings that the plan is consistent with the Denver Comprehensive Plan and applicable supplements, that an inclusive public process was utilized, and that the plan includes a long-term view, staff recommends **adoption of the Elyria and Swansea Neighborhoods Plan as a supplement to the Denver Comprehensive Plan.**